Go Red for Women Observance Aims to Heighten Awareness of Heart Disease

The American Heart Association started Go Red for Women, first observed in 2004, as a national awareness campaign focusing on heart disease, the leading killer of women older than 25 in the United States. Governor Fletcher has proclaimed February Kentucky Heart Health Month to coincide with the presidential proclamation of American Heart Month.

One woman in the United States dies every minute from diseases of the heart and blood vessels, collectively called cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVD, including stroke, claims more lives nationwide than the next four leading causes of death combined.

Symptoms of heart disease in women can differ from those men experience. Women may have heart disease without knowing it, while men often experience arm and chest pain, shortness of breath and other symptoms of CVD. More than 60 percent of women who die suddenly of heart disease have no prior symptoms. Heart disease rates can triple for women after menopause, regardless of age.

Women – and men – can greatly reduce their risks or even prevent heart disease by adopting healthy lifestyles, including a low-fat diet and regular physical activity. Perhaps the most important thing Kentuckians can do to prevent heart disease is to never start smoking. Smokers who stop can greatly reduce their risk of heart disease.

The state's observance of Go Red for Women Day and Kentucky Heart Health Month are part of Governor Fletcher's Get Healthy Kentucky initiative to reduce the incidence and severity of chronic disease and promote overall health improvement among Kentuckians.

For more information about National Go Red for Women Day, visit the Web site at http://www.goredforwomen.com/index.html. For more information about heart disease, contact the American Heart Association at (888) MY-HEART or visit the Web site at www.americanheart.org. For information on ways to prevent heart disease, including diet and physical activity tips, visit the Get Healthy Kentucky Web site at www.gethealthy.ky.gov.